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ABSTRACT

The National Advisory Council on Education Professions Development has been reviewing some of the major evaluations and evaluation research in the period 1966 to date, seeking to identify the salient issues concerning the evaluation of educational endeavors. This document is a preliminary statement of the findings and recommendations. The interest in assessing effectiveness is not confined to education. The following developments show the important role assigned to evaluation of federal activities generally: a) increasingly, in new legislation enacted and in amendments to existing statutes, explicit provision for evaluation has been made; b) the executive branch's emphasis on "cost-effectiveness" assumes the capacity on the part of the agencies to carry out appropriate and effective evaluation; c) there has been a very substantial increase in the funds allotted for evaluation in the executive branch. The importance that has been assigned to evaluation, and the influence that such studies have exerted to date, prompts a question that must receive serious consideration: Is "evaluation," as an aspect of social science research, capable of responding adequately to the extraordinary demands placed upon it by the developments cited above? The council will continue to investigate this question, but it has concluded that there is a need for a full-scale examination of the evaluation procedures of federal programs in education. (JA)

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EVALUATION OF EDUCATION: IN NEED OF EXAMINATION

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A Report of the
National Advisory Council
on Education Professions Development

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* As of September 1973. The Council consists of fifteen members. Appointments to fill current vacancies are now being made by the President.

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Joseph Young - Executive Director

PREFACE

The National Advisory Council on Education Professions Development was established by the Congress in 1967 to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the operations of the Education Professions Development Act (Title V of the Higher Education Act), and of all other programs of the Federal government having to do with the training and development of educational personnel. These programs, which involve an annual outlay in excess of half a billion dollars, are administered by a variety of Federal agencies: the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; the National Science Foundation; the Office of Economic Opportunity; National Institutes of Health; the Manpower Administration of the Department of Labor; the National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities; and similar agencies. The members of this Council are appointed by the President. The Council submits its reports to the President and Congress.

In January of 1972 this Council submitted a report to the President and to the Congress in which we examined the policies governing a number of Federal efforts designed to bring about improvements in the training and development of those educational personnel who staff the schools and colleges of the nation.

In that report, entitled Windows to the Bureaucracy, we concluded that -- with reference to policies needed to insure effective results from legislation -- "the resources devoted to the formulation of policies are inadequate; the processes employed are primitive; and the results are unacceptable."

We outlined some specific steps that might be taken by both the Congress and the Executive Branch to bring about improvements in the formulation of "policies of effective means."

Since that time we have been conducting an inquiry into another equally important subject: the way in which Federal programs in education--and the state and local projects which are supported with these program funds--are being evaluated. The focus has been on the training of educational personnel, though we have included in our concerns the evaluation of other aspects of education.

The Council has addressed the question of evaluation on two earlier occasions. The first was in the Council's Second Annual Report, submitted in January 1969. This report ranged over a number of issues bearing on the improvement of the Federal effort in education. One chapter was devoted to Research and Evaluation.

Evaluation was the subject of a special report devoted exclusively to this topic. This was submitted in May 1969. We concluded this special report by saying:

> In its second annual report, submitted earlier this year to the President and Congress, this Council devoted a major section to research and evaluation. It has expanded on its statements in that report at this time because the need for sensible policies concerning evaluation of educational programs is rapidly emerging as one of the major issues in American education.
> (emphasis added)

In its current inquiry, this Council has been reviewing some of the major evaluations and evaluation research reported on during the period 1966 to date. It has also been seeking to identify the salient issues concerning the evaluation of educational endeavors.

This report is a preliminary statement of our findings and recommendations.

EVALUATION OF EDUCATION: IN NEED OF EXAMINATION

Over the past ten years some $25 billion dollars has been invested in Federal efforts to improve education in the elementary and secondary schools, in the colleges and universities, and in other settings.

The early part of this period saw the Federal government initiate a range of actions designed to bring about improvements in almost every aspect of the educational system: a number of pieces of landmark legislation were passed; substantial funds were appropriated to carry out this legislation; programs to implement this legislation were developed in the Office of Education, the National Science Foundation, the Office of Economic Opportunity, the National Institutes of Health, the Manpower Administration of the Department of Labor the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities, and other agencies.

More recently, the emphasis has shifted from the initiation of efforts aimed at bringing about improvements in American education to an interest in determining whether these efforts are achieving their goals.

This interest in evaluating effectiveness is not confined to education. The following developments give some indication of the important role that has now been assigned to evaluation of Federal activities generally:

1. Increasingly in new legislation enacted and in amendments to existing statutes explicit provision for evaluation has been made. The General Accounting Office reports that in the areas of health, education, welfare, economic opportunity, and like Federal activities, there are twenty-three Acts in which formal objective evaluation is now prescribed. Some of these statutes have numerous provisions for evaluation.

2. The Executive Branch has been placing increasing emphasis on "cost-effectiveness" as a means for determining whether the results from given Federal programs are in proportion to the money expended. Such a procedure assumes the capacity on the part of the agencies to carry out appropriate and effective evaluation.

3. There has been a very substantial increase in the funds alloted for evaluation in the Executive Branch. The General Accounting Office reports that expenditures for non-defense program evaluation have jumped from $19 million in 1969 to $110 million in 1972.

4. It is clear that before the end of this year the Congress will have instituted some major reforms related to fundamental aspects of its own procedures. We speak of provisions for the establishment of budget ceilings; for machinery which will enable the Congress to set broad areas of priority concern; and for the creation of a Congressional Office of the Budget. The success of these reforms will depend, in no small way, on the capacity of the Congress to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs it has legislated -- or at least to interpret evaluations conducted by the Executive Branch and to appraise the quality of such evaluations.

In the field of education, the amount of activity devoted to evaluation has been considerable. Numerous evaluation studies, as well as books, monographs and articles analyzing the findings of these studies, have been published -- all in an attempt to determine what works and what does not work and, indeed, whether anything works in education.

The importance that has been assigned to evaluation, and the influence that evaluation studies have exerted to date, prompt a question that must receive serious consideration:

> Is "evaluation", as an aspect of social science research, capable of responding adequately to the extraordinary demands placed upon it by the developments cited above?

This Council has been exploring this question over the last few months. This exploration has consisted of a review of major evaluation studies and an attempt to identify those salient issues which the President and the Congress might take into account in making decisions concerning the evaluation of educational effectiveness, and in appraising existing evaluations of Federal efforts

in education. We intend to continue this inquiry. However, we feel it appropriate to report two conclusions arrived at up to this point:

1. There is a need for a full-scale examination of the concepts, methods and manner of conducting evaluations of Federal programs in education.

2. Federal agencies responsible for evaluating educational programs should prepare policy statements which identify and record the positions of these agencies on the major issues concerning evaluation. Such positions would form a basis for guiding the decisions of these agencies with respect to the kinds of evaluation they intend to pursue.

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